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DIVERSIONS FOR STUDENTS.

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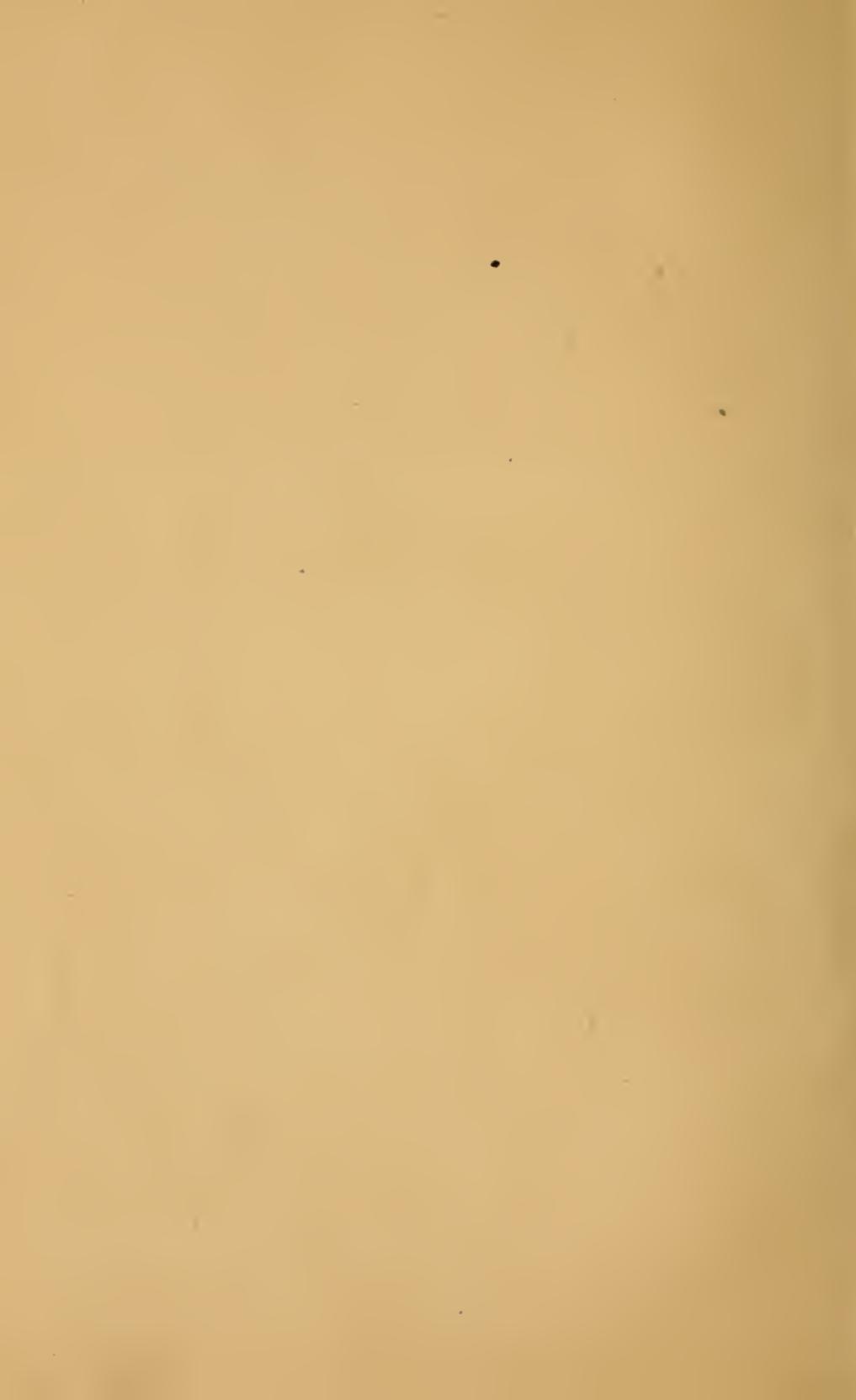
QUEEN OF HEARTS.

A Dramatic Fantasia.

BY J. B. G.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY GINN, HEATH, & CO.

1885.





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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FAIRY HEARTSEASE.

QUEEN OF HEARTS.

ACE OF HEARTS (*The Princess*).

ACE OF DIAMONDS,
ACE OF SPADES,
ACE OF CLUBS,

} *Maids of Honor.*

KING OF HEARTS.

THE WHITE KNIGHT, *Crown Prince of Euchre.*

KNAVE OF HEARTS,
KNAVE OF DIAMONDS,
TEN OF HEARTS,

} *Young Courtiers.*

HERALD.

PAGE (*Five of Hearts*).

CLUBS, SPADES, DIAMONDS, ETC.

COSTUME.

The characters should be dressed as much as possible to suggest cards, except the fairy, who may wear either the conventional costume, or a flowing classic robe.

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS.

PROLOGUE.

Tableau of cards (court cards with blanks behind them, others with their proper cards in front) discovered. King, Queen, Knave, and Ace of Hearts, Ace of Clubs, and Knave of Diamonds, and others if desired, *as cards*. Enter Fairy, who looks on them with interest.

Fairy. “The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts,
 All on a summer’s day ;
The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
 And took them quite away.”

So runs the story children learn,
 Sung by the ancient bards,
Of crime and retribution stern,—
 The epic of the cards.

That must have been long, long ago,
 An age before my day,—
Some fairy, pitying their woe,
 Gave them a holiday.

Just see how pitiful their fate !
 They’re pasted on to boards,
Crammed into boxes, kept up late,
 And thumbed by greasy hordes.

Turned up, and thrown away, and dealt
 So roughly with, I’m sure,
Poor creatures, they must oft have felt
 Their life an awful bore.

I've half a mind to let them out
 To see a little grain
 Of real life, and walk about
 The outside world again.

I wonder what they'll do? No doubt
 'Twill be about the same,
 For history winds in and out,
 But plays the same old game.

I'll make the trial, any way ;
 But what's the spell — let's see —
 Oh, I remember! — I must say, —
 Now — presto — one — two — three.

[At "three," strikes the stage with the end of her wand. Soft music, coming to a sforzando climax, at which the blanks vanish, and the cards wake up, rub their eyes, and look around with surprise.]

King. [Winking.] Eh! Hallo! what's this? How came we here?

Fairy. Oh! you're alive, that's all. I thought, my friends, I would just turn you into real people a little while.

K. Hm.

Queen. [Yawning.] Is it any fun? I have almost forgotten about it.

F. Oh! I'm afraid its rather dull, but may be you will like it just for a change.

Ace. Oh, how nice!

F. You won't always find it easy to manage ; but I will be by, and help you out if you get into any trouble. Now you two sit down here ; you [to KING] with your newspaper, and the Queen opposite with her knitting-work, and you'll begin life like Adam and Eve in Paradise. The rest of you may go out a while. [Exeunt all but KING and QUEEN, who sit down.

ACT I.

QUEEN and KING.

Q. [To KING.] My dear, we must have a party.

K. [Reads half aloud.]

Q. My dear !

K. [Reads.] Horrible accident ! Her majesty, the Queen of Clubs, while out driving yesterday —

Q. Oh ! I'm not to be diverted in that way. I want to talk to you.

K. [Reads.] In this city, on the 12th instant, by the Right Reverend, the Bishop of Spadille —

Q. [Interrupting.] Oh ! who ? [Recovering herself, and biting her lips.] But will you just listen to me a minute ?

K. [Reads.] Camel's hair, it seems, will be very much worn again this season. A very neat costume we noticed at Shuffle and Cutts had —

Q. [Rising and snatching paper.] Oh ! let me see. I thought they would last another season. What colors will be worn ? Oh ! those bewitching russets. [Reads half aloud.]

K. [Chuckling.] You will find quite a full description there. Really, their Paris correspondent is a very intelligent fellow.

Q. And here are some fine evening costumes. They are just the thing for my party. I will tell Ace about them.

K. [Aside, with disappointment.] Oh, confound it ! I thought they were all street dresses.

Q. [Sitting down.] And that reminds me. Now, dear, you must let me have a party. We really can't decently get along without. There are the Diamonds, who have had a superb ball, — a brilliant affair. And even those beggarly

Clubs have had the presumption to give a kettle-drum. And then there was the Spades' garden party. It is actually mean not to do something. I am absolutely ashamed to accept another invitation.

K. [Aside.] Gracious ! I wish you never would, nor send one either.

Q. And then, you know, there's our dear child, Ace. She has grown a lovely girl. We must bring her out more. There are several young men that would be excellent matches for her. We have no son, you know. . . . There might be a revolution in case — Suppose there should be an attempt to *make it next*, and *have diamonds trumps*. You *must* be looking out for a successor.

K. [Quickly.] Oh, thank you, my dear ! I'm not in haste.

Q. But I've been watching the child for some time. It's my opinion she is interested in somebody we don't know about.

K. Nonsense ! She is a princess, and knows better than to care for anybody but an eligible young man. But perhaps it is time to secure a husband for her. I have one in mind now.

Q. So have I. There's the Knave of Hearts. Frank, gay, witty, — a charming young fellow. After he's tamed down a little he would make an excellent husband.

K. Jupiter ! A nice young man for a family party ! Spends as much as the whole royal budget in champagne and cigars. Bah ! I'd rather she should be the sixtieth Mrs. Brigham Young. I meant the Knave of Diamonds.

Q. There ! You men are always just so unreasonable. Hearts is only a little gay. All young men of spirit go through that stage. But your Knave of Diamonds ! Ugh ! a scheming, selfish creature. Sharp enough to cut his own head off. He's sure to make any woman unhappy. Jilted the Ace of

Spades, — a splendid girl, — because she couldn't help along his ambitious schemes.

K. I wish you would speak more respectfully of my friend and counsellor.

Q. Oh, yes ! you're so very kind to my favorite. The Knave of Hearts is worth —

K. Stuff ! I won't hear of him.

Q. Of course you are taken in by that hypocritical —

K. Well, well, never mind now. Let's talk about the party. I don't mind so much having it, though you know I hate parties ; but the expense, my dear, the expense ! There was a deficit last year of over ten millions, and people are grumbling about the taxes dreadfully.

Q. Now do, dear. It won't be so very expensive. We'll use kerosene in the grand chandelier instead of gas, and we needn't have any music but a piano, and we'll *invite* a pianist. And now about refreshments. I will make some tarts myself. [Coaxingly.] You know you are so fond of them, and you used to think I made them so nicely.

K. Well, well, my dear, I suppose I must. I will get Finesse to stick the amount somewhere in the budget, — secret service, stationery, or harbor excursions, or something of that kind.

Q. Oh, what a dear ! Now let's plan it.

K. Well, we'll have a good many, — say *fifty-two*.

Q. Mercy ! what a *pack* ! Oh, no ! have a select little German, — only *thirty-two*. Then there will be room to dance !

K. Confound your dancing ! But have it as you like. Say thirty-two then. Whom will you have ?

Q. There are the Diamonds, to begin with.

K. Yes, I suppose we must have them. They are our nearest neighbors, — *next in suit*, you know. And then there are the Spades.

Q. Gracious ! Not those vulgar people. I don't mind the Clubs, but the Spades are too bad. Why, they are nothing but market gardeners ! Now the Clubs are, at any rate, of a military family.

K. The Spades do seem a little low in this country ; but let me tell you, my dear, their ancestors were soldiers of the highest rank, and their connections abroad are the *Piques*, — the best blood in Europe. And as for your Clubs, their family was only one of Trefoils, — mere haymakers, related to the clovers and the like.

Q. Bah ! I don't care a fig for your history and genealogy and stuff. The Spades are as low as they can be, and don't go into society at all. I won't have them in my house.

K. Oh, very well ! I don't care a fig for your *society*. You needn't have anybody at all. [Rises in a passion.]

Q. [Vexed.] There ! I knew you just wanted to annoy me. What difference does it make to you who comes ?

K. If you'd only just be reasonable !

Q. It's you that are obstinate. It's always just so when I want anything.

K. But you are so particular about little things. It's foolish.

Q. Oh, indeed ; foolish, is it ?

K. Now do restrain your temper. You're so passionate ; you get so angry about nothing ; you fume and fret so —

[Gradually becoming more and more angry,
and walking up and down.]

Q. Oh, go on ! go on !

K. I won't say another word ! [Walks up and down.]

[QUEEN vexed, crying, occasionally peeping out
at him. KING sneezes.]

Q. Bless you !

K. [Turns quickly.] Did you say, Bless you ?

Q. Why, yes.

K. Then let's make up. [Rushes up and embraces her.] There, there, my dear, you may have just the ones you want.

Q. No, I won't. I'll have them all.

K. Well, well, do just as you like.

Enter TEN.

Ten. May it please your majesty, a messenger without desires to speak with your majesty on important business. A dangerous plot is suspected. Fears are entertained that something may *turn up*. A *deal* of trouble is brewing.

K. Bless my soul, we cannot let this *pass*. We will to our royal audience-room, and hear the report of this matter. Bye bye, my dear. [Exeunt KING and TEN.

Q. Knave of Diamonds, indeed! A low, double-faced politician! He'd do to sit for a portrait of Janus. But I will *trump* that *trick*.

Enter TEN.

Ten. Your majesty!

Q. Proceed.

Ten. Her Royal Highness and the ladies of your royal court await your pleasure.

Q. Bid them come in.

[Exit TEN.

Enter LADIES (four ACES) and salute the QUEEN.

Q. Good morning to your Royal Highness. Good morning, ladies. I have summoned you on an important matter. I have news to tell you.

Ace of Spades. Your majesty does us honor by this confidence.

Ace of Diamonds. [Aside to other ladies.] Goodness gracious! what can it be?

Ace of Hearts. [Aside.] Can it be that anybody is engaged?

A. of D. [Aside.] Oh ! it's some bit of scandal.

A. of S. [Aside to ladies.] The king is going to have a new waistcoat. We are to decide the color.

Q. I am going to give a German !!!!!

A. of H. Your majesty does well to gratify the court.

A. of S. [Aside.] Delightful !

A. of D. [Aside.] Divine !

A. of C. [Aside.] Oh, ecstasy !

A. of D. [Aloud to QUEEN.] Your majesty will doubtless take some time for preparation ?

Q Impossible. I have set next Thursday.

A. of C. [Aside.] Mercy ! what shall we do ?

A. of D. We haven't a blessed thing to wear.

A. of S. Bring down the royal ragbags of the last three centuries. Pick out the odds and ends, and we shall be just in the newest fashion.

A. of H. [Aside.] Dear me ! I can't wear my white muslin with a blue ribbon.

A. of S. [Aside.] Oh, yes you can ! Make it scant in front, and let it draggle well behind. Get all the hair you can, and do it over a sofa pillow.

Q. Ladies, advise me what color is best for invitations. I think a chocolate brown.

Enter TEN.

Ten. Your majesty !

Q. Speak.

Ten. A minstrel without craves audience of your majesty.

Q. Seemed he worthy ?

Ten. Indeed he did, your majesty ; the very quintessence of gentility. He wears an ulster and a striped shirt front.

He has a bull terrier, and his cane is short and stout as any watchman's billet.

A. of S. The very stage properties of *nobbiness*.

Q. Shall we admit him, ladies?

A. of D. 'Twere well at least to see him, your majesty.

[*Aside.*] Gracious ! I hope she will. I'm all of a quiver to see what he's like.

A. of C. [Aside.] Oh, yes ! Young men are few, and minstrels rarer still. 'Tis long since we have heard a song.

A. of S. [Aside.] Our singers now are dreary warblers. Their fire is as warm as an artificial back-log.

A. of H. [To QUEEN.] Please let him in. I should like to hear a song so.

Q. Well, Ten, admit him.

A. of C. [Aside.] Order him up. Don't let him even change his suit. [*Exit TEN.*]

Enter WHITE KNIGHT, disguised in an ulster. Guitar on his shoulder. Sensation.

A. of S. [Aside.] Goodness ! he's as gay as an undertaker. But these girls like it. His air promises a romance in three volumes. They'll dote on him.

A. of D. [Aside.] Oh, isn't he handsome ! So romantic ! And he looks so piercingly at me !

A. of C. [Aside.] No, he looked at me.

A. of S. [Aside.] You silly things ! 'twas me.

A. of D. [Aside.] I'm sure he looked at me.

A. of S. [Aside.] A perfect family portrait that stares at every spectator.

W. K. [Aside.] Good ! the Princess. I hoped so. She does not recognize me. Excellent. The Queen seems amiable. I'll try to make friends with her.

Q. Enter, gentle sir ; your craft is always welcome.

W. K. Thanks, your majesty. I hope my humble skill may win your favor.

Q. Sing on. Your song will doubtless please ; though I fear your strain will be a sad one. Your mien betokens sorrow.

A. of S. [Aside.] So much the better. You girls are as fond of tears as toads are of a shower.

A. of C. [Aside.] Oh, isn't it touching !

W. K. True, your majesty ; but one must sing what comes. I, alas ! have suffered.

A. of H. [Aside.] What a dear interesting creature !

A. of D. [Aside.] Oh, he's heavenly !

A. of C. [Aside.] Oh, I wish he'd tell his story !

A. of S. [Aside.] Oh ! I can tell it ! A pair of blue eyes, a water-wave, and a broken heart. But they get well. Wait for the next volume.

[WHITE KNIGHT *sings feelingly. The others listen with rapt attention. Goes on tuning his instrument.*

A. of D. How sad !

A. of C. How noble he seems !

Q. Such feeling !

A. of S. Oh ! they learn the art, your majesty. He'll be as merry as a chirping grasshopper in five minutes.

A. of C. [In tears.] For shame, you sarcastic thing ! It's mean to insult misfortune.

[WHITE KNIGHT *overhearing is affected.*

A. of H. [Lower tone to QUEEN.] I don't believe he's a minstrel at all. Just now, in his song, he gave me such a look ! Nobody but a prince would dare. I never had a minstrel look at me so.

Q. You are mistaken, my dear. He is a very common person. [Aside.] But he's very amiable. I am quite attached to him. Fair sir, your song is exquisite. Whose is it ?

W. K. The words and music are my own, your majesty.

A. of D. [Aside.] What genius !

A. of C. A poet, too !

Q. Will you be pleased to sing another ?

[WHITE KNIGHT *sings again.*]

Q. You have moved us much in your favor. Will it please you to tell your tale ? We may relieve you.

W. K. No doubt your majesty can do much. [Aside.] I will confess to her. If she *assists*, the King must *take me up*. The stake is high and deserves a bold game. [Aloud.] Indeed, your majesty can do more than any other.

A. of D. [Aside.] Oh, how exciting !

A. of C. [Aside.] I wonder what it can be ?

Q. Go on with your story.

W. K. But, your majesty, I cannot make my sorrows so public. I must speak with your majesty alone.

A. of D. [Aside, vexed.] How provoking !

Q. Your timidity is natural. Ladies, you may retire and prepare the invitations for the German.

[*Ladies salute and retire with regret.*]

Q. [Shutting door.] Sir, I am impatient to hear your story.

W. K. [With significance.] 'Tis no new one, your majesty. I love a lady.

Q. And she ?

W. K. Is of the very highest station, worth, and beauty.

Q. Surely, youth and genius ought not to despair, if aided by our royal favor.

W. K. [Kneeling.] Your majesty emboldens me.

Q. Speak out.

W. K. Can your majesty pardon me ? She is no other than the Princess Ace of Hearts.

Q. Ah ! [With dissembled vexation, and somewhat strongly.] How came this ?

W. K. At first, by a mere accident, your majesty. Last

summer, as I flung the gaudy fly along a mountain stream, I came upon a picnic party gathering water-lilies. The Princess was among them ; and I was stricken instantly.

Q. You *lead* from a *short suit*, — a hazardous play ! You, a minstrel — aspire —

W. K. I am not a minstrel, your majesty. I am the Hero of the West, the White Knight, called the Joker. [Throws off his ulster.]

Q. Ah ! [Aside.] Vexation ! This accounts for the Princess' conduct. I had suspected something. [Aloud.] You quite deceived me. An ulster can conceal the knightliest gentleman. I have often seen the students in the horse-cars so disguised. But does the Princess know you are here ? Does she know your feelings ?

W. K. I have told her nothing. But then, few maidens need sealed documents in those matters.

Q. True. [Aside.] Hm ! so much the worse. A dangerous rival for my favorite, Hearts. But it would be a pity to cross his love, and disappoint at once so charming a young fellow. Just when I am going to have a party, too. [Aloud.] Your suit is difficult. The King has other designs.

W. K. And your majesty ?

Q. Hm ! It is rather sudden ; but we will see. You have my leave to stay at court and *establish your suit*. Be silent and discreet.

W. K. Thanks, thanks, your majesty.

Q. Be at the German Thursday. Till then, *au revoir*.

[WHITE KNIGHT *kisses her hand*.]

W. K. [Aside.] I think I have secured the Queen. That's certainly a *point*. [Exit.]

Q. This young man may serve me after all. I will play him against the King's *left bower*. [Rises.] And he is wonderfully attractive, wonderfully. The dear child ! I am sure I can't blame her for falling in love with him. What if I

should take up his cause in good earnest. I should like to favor him. And it would please my dear Ace so much. She would love me almost to death. There's no love so sweet as that that's meant for somebody else. . . . But what can I do? I can't abandon Hearts. 'Twas I that set him on to sue for the Princess when that saucy Ace of Diamonds jilted him. I was very fond of his father, and I wanted to do something to advance the young man for his sake. Besides, I had to block the King's game with that scamp, the Knave of Diamonds. And I had to punish the Ace of Diamonds too. Impertinent little minx! I guess she has had enough of it by this time, and wishes she had him back. Good enough for her. . . . No, I'll stick to Hearts. Ace will like him just as well if she finds she can't have the other. . . . It's a pity, too. The stranger is very, very captivating. But I wonder if she is really so fond of him? Hm—yes—I can't be mistaken. They are very easy to read at her age. She's interested, certainly. I will watch her. And here she comes. I'll make her show her hand, and decide the game at once.

Enter ACE OF HEARTS.

A. of H. We forgot one thing, your majesty. Are we to say anything about the hour in the invitations?

Q. No, I think you had better not. But are you sure you have the whole list? You know we need young gentlemen. Perhaps you may think of some more. Did you see any new ones this summer?

A. of H. No; at least, none that are here.

Q. No matter, then. But, maybe— Were there any new ones?

A. of H. No— Well, yes, there were a few. A young man from the West.

Q. [Aside.] Yes, I thought so. *[Aloud.]* I hear there are some Western men in town.

A. of H. Oh, are there? Who?

Q. I heard no names. Hm — yes — they said the Joker.

A. of H. [Interrupting.] Oh! Is he here?

Q. Do you know him?

A. of H. [Recovering herself.] He was an excellent dancer.

Q. Did you dance with him?

A. of H. [Becoming confused.] Yes, once. Perhaps twice, and walked with him once on the beach — and — *[stops, still more confused]*. [QUEEN rings.]

Q. Oh! you do know him then?

Enter PAGE.

Q. [To PAGE.] Go call the King. [Exit PAGE.]

A. of H. Oh, mamma! please don't tell papa. I really did not mean to give him any encouragement. But he was so handsome, and he talked so charmingly, and sang so divinely, I — you know I had to be polite to him.

Enter KING.

K. What's the matter now?

Q. Here's a pretty piece of business. With your bungling play, trying to get in your Knave of Diamonds, you have made Ace fall in love with a man we know nothing about.

K. The deuce she has! Who is he?

Q. The White Knight.

K. Fire and fury! I'll cure her of that. Page, go get the Archbishop forthwith. I'll have her married instantly.

[Exit PAGE.]

Q. But not to your crafty schemer. She shall marry the Knave of Hearts.

A. of H. But I won't marry anybody. I'll join the Harvard Annex first, unless — the White Knight should come for me.

Q. But, my dear, he'll never come. Of course he has forgotten all about you. A mere watering-place acquaintance.

A. of H. But, mamma, you said he *was* here.

Q. [Confused.] Yes, to be sure ; but he's only here on business. *[Aside.]* How stupid !

K. What, the villain here ? I'll have his head off in a twinkling. You shall marry Diamonds.

Q. She shall marry Hearts.

A. of H. I can't marry anybody but the Joker.

K. I say you shall marry Diamonds.

Q. She shall not marry Diamonds *[crosses to her, and caresses her]* ; she shall marry Hearts.

A. of H. I won't marry anybody but the Joker.

[All stand at bay.]

Enter FAIRY.

Fairy. There, I knew you'd get into a muddle and need me.

K. But mustn't a king and father be obeyed ?

Q. Mustn't a queen and mother marry her daughter ?

A. of H. And, dear Fairy, can't a girl and princess choose her own husband ? *[Goes to FAIRY.]*

Fairy. There, there now, it grows worse and worse. It's a deadlock, you see. You must be reasonable. I'll tell you what to do. Try the civil service fashion. Have a *competitive examination* for the place of husband of the Princess.

K. Hm ! *[Aside.]* A good political scheme. It will please the people, and then I can give the place as I like afterwards. That's the way they all do. Nobody will see through it except the politicians.

Q. Good ! [Aside.] I'll tutor Hearts myself. He's sure to win.

A. of H. Well, I will agree to that ; [Aside.] but I won't marry anybody but *him*, anyway.

K. We can have it all at the German. But what shall it be in ?

Fairy. Oh ! in — music, dancing, and conundrums.

All. Agreed.

Q. [To Ace.] Come, my dear ; now we'll go and make the tarts.

KING. FAIRY. QUEEN. ACE OF HEARTS.

Curtain.

ACT II.

Gas turned down. Enter ACES OF SPADES, CLUBS, and DIAMONDS. Middle front.

Diam. Oh, such news ! You never heard anything like it.

Sp. Oh, what ?

Cl. Oh, let's hear !

Diam. I couldn't have believed it possible.

Sp. Come, tell !

Cl. Yes, tell, tell !

Diam. You would scream.

Cl. For mercy's sake, what is it ? Is it anything about the handsome stranger ?

Diam. Oh, yes, yes ! it's all about the handsome stranger, and it's the most wonderful thing.

Sp. Oh, let her keep it to herself ! It will choke her bye and bye, and she will have to let it out.

Cl. I wish it would.

Diam. But you will tell?

Sp. Oh, no, indeed!

Cl. Never! never!

Diam. But won't you ever tell anybody at all, ever?

Cl. Not for worlds.

Sp. Oh, bah! it will be something of no consequence, and that everybody knows, too. I don't want to hear it.

Diam. It's — it's — it's the handsome stranger. He's — the White Knight! [Both seize hold of DIAMONDS.

Sp. Oh, my!

Cl. Oh, where is he?

Sp. What did he come for?

Cl. Will he be at the German?

[Both give an instantaneous look at their clothes.

Diam. Oh, yes! and he's asked for the hand of the Princess.

Sp. and *Cl.* [Suddenly letting go.] Oh!

Sp. You might know it, after the scandalous way they behaved last summer. Somebody ought to have told her mother.

Diam. Why, how did they behave?

Cl. Was it so very bad?

Sp. Oh, mercy, yes! — I was in the picnic party when he came. He was fishing, and looked like a fright. Had on a blue shirt and big boots. I never should have thought of falling in love with him. But the Princess is just such a silly thing. The minute he looked at her, you might have knocked her down with a feather. And he was just as bad. He lost a great trout while he was looking at her, and almost went in heels over head himself. I never saw such ninny-hammers.

Cl. How long since *you* cut your wisdom teeth?

Diam. Oh, do keep still, and let her talk.

Sp. And then he came to the house where we were stop-

ping, and stayed a week. Pretended he had broken his tackle. The boys all said it was too thin. I suppose they meant—

Diam. [Interrupting.] Oh, yes, of course ! Go on.

Sp. And they danced together, and walked together on the shore, — oh, so late ! — I used to see them every night.

Cl. What were *you* up for ?

Sp. It's none of your business, is it ?

Cl. Then I don't see as it's any of your business what she did.

Diam. Now, girls, don't quarrel. You go on.

Sp. Why, everybody was shocked. And he isn't anybody, either. I don't see how she could. His family has never been heard of till within a few years. It isn't mentioned in Hoyle's Peerage at all.

Diam. I don't care. He's handsome, and brave, and strong, and beats everybody at everything.

Cl. And he's rich, too. Pshaw ! you'd either of you marry him in a minute, if you could. He's worth a dozen of your beggarly knaves.

Diam. But you can't, either of you, have him. They're going to have a tournament for the Princess's hand at the German. Of course he'll win.

Sp. I hope so.

Cl. Of course you girls hope so. I'm thankful *my* lover doesn't want any Princess. But are they really going to have a contest ?

Diam. Oh, no ! It's only a modern, tame affair. Music, dancing, and conundrums. No charging, nor broken lances, nor frightened horses, nor killed, nor wounded. No fun at all. But it will make variety, any way.

Sp. Sh ! girls, I hear steps ! [They listen.] Oh, it's men ! Let's go. It's so dark ! I wish they'd lighted the gas in the great hall. It would be dreadful to fall in with them.

[They run to the right, SPADES leading. She is caught behind the wing by KNAVE OF DIAMONDS, and screams.

Ct. Oh, they are on this side ! [Runs back to left, where DIAMONDS is caught in same way by KNAVE OF HEARTS.] Oh, dear, they are here, too ! [Runs to back, and is caught by TEN, coming in.] Goodness, they are everywhere. [Faints, and is caught by TEN, and taken to seat at back, where he tries to bring her to, with exaggerated effort.]

Enter KNAVE OF DIAMONDS, with ACE OF SPADES on his arm, holding her fast.

K. of D. Ho, ho, my dear ! Why so fast ?

Sp. [Aside.] It's the Knave of Diamonds. I'll pay him off ! [Changing her voice, to represent a serving-maid, and keeping her face out of sight. Aloud.] Oh, do let me go, sir ! I shall be blamed for staying.

K. of D. Oh, pshaw ! Pretend you stayed to see your sweetheart. They won't mind that.

Sp. Oh, but I haven't any, sir !

K. of D. No sweetheart ! What fatal waste ! Take me, then, heart-riddling, soul-disturbing creature ! Most delicious card in the pack ! I know by this little sample. [Caressing her hand, which he holds fast.] What do they call this bundle of loveliness ?

Sp. I am the Two of Spades, the Little Casino. But I don't want a lover. They tell me they are all false.

K. of D. Oh, don't believe them ! The greatest villain would be a bond-slave to your charms. My heart is yours. It flashed upon me the instant I met you that our fates were entwined. I see it in the cards. Our lives are one.

Sp. I don't dare trust you. I have heard men talk before. It sounds pretty, but they get it by heart. I have seen it all in the Complete Letter-writer.

K. of D. Oh, I swear it's real ! Pray give me a little lodgement in your heart. I throw myself at your feet.

Sp. [Disengaging herself by a quick movement.] Thank you ! I don't want any second-hand furniture. And when I have any place in my heart, I will look for a permanent tenant. I knew you at once. You are the Knave of Diamonds, the greatest scamp in the kingdom. You make love to me ! I wouldn't have you, if old maids were to be burnt at the stake, and every other man but you were drowned in a deluge. Ugh !

[Runs away.]

K. of D. Egad ! I caught a Tartar. What cats they all are ! Velvet paws, and claws like cutlasses. It was an odd trick, though. She was not what she pretended to be. Deuce take me, who was she ? I'll follow, and find out.

[Gas turned on.]

Enter KNAVE OF HEARTS, with ACE OF DIAMONDS on his arm.

Hearts. I am so glad to meet you. I had something special to say —

Diam. And I had a great many things to tell you. Do you know about the White Knight and the Princess ? Oh, such a flirtation !

K. of H. [Seizing her hand.] My dear Diamonds —

Diam. [Interrupting.] Oh, yes, my new ring ! Isn't it exquisite ? It's an opal. The Princess gave it to me for a birthday present.

K. of H. Just listen a minute, Diamonds.

Diam. Why ! do you hear anything ? Oh, you frightened us so before ! 'Twas such a joke ! We tried to run away, and I ran right into your arms.

K. of H. I wish you'd stay . . .

Diam. Oh, I can't stay more than a minute. I must go and dress for the German. The saloon is lighted, you see, already.

K. of H. You know, Diamonds, we've been friends this ever so long.

Diam. Oh, yes ! and I hope we shall be friends a great while longer.

K. of H. I hope we shall be . . .

Diam. Yes, it's so delightful to have gentlemen friends. You want some to flirt with, and some to dance with, and some to send you bouquets and tickets. You can't have too many.

K. of H. And which class do you put me in ?

Diam. [Confused.] Oh, I don't know which. You are good to keep, to see what you'll come to.

K. of H. But I only want one friend, and that's you. My dear Diamonds, if you only knew how much I loved you.

Diam. Oh, yes ! it's so in the song. [Humming.] *Si tu savais comme je t'aime.*

K. of H. Now tell me, won't you love me ?

Diam. I'm sure I wish I could, but I can't.

K. of H. I don't see why it should be so very difficult.

Diam. Perhaps not for you. Maybe you are like Pompey, in love with yourself, without a rival. O no, Hearts, I don't mean that. I know how good you are, and I'm very sorry, but you wouldn't have me pretend to if I didn't ?

K. of H. That kind of lying often comes true, though. But, if I can't have you, I must do without.

Diam. We shall be friends, shan't we ?

K. of H. Oh, I couldn't hate you, if I tried.

Diam. Well, then, show your friendship, and escort me in. I must get ready for the German.

K. of H. You know I am your servant, always. [Exeunt.

Enter TEN, with CLUBS, just recovered.

Clubs. Oh, mercy, Ten, is it you ? I needn't have fainted at all. I am almost sorry I did.

Ten. I hope not quite.

Cl. Well, I won't regret it, if you don't. But you must complete your service, and take me in. *I* might fall in with somebody else.

Ten. I would escort you to the stake, most adorable of women !

Cl. Oh, no, thank you ! I don't care to go.

[*TEN offers his arm, and they go out.*

Enter KNAVE OF DIAMONDS.

K. of D. I can't find that saucy jade. But no matter, that will keep ; but I wonder what the King was called away for ? He had just promised me the hand of the Princess, and the place of prime minister : now the question is to plot or not to plot. What if I abandon the conspiracy altogether ? I ought to come out ahead without it. Let's count the score. I am sure of the King, that's as good as a double, that's two. Gain the Princess, and there's another double ; and the rub, — ay, there's the rub sure enough. But I never failed with them yet. They are easy enough to bring to terms. A compliment, a sigh, and a bouquet, — and they are finished directly. There's the Ace of Spades. How fond she used to be of me ! I liked the girl, too. Pity I had to drop her ! But politics, politics ! Head of the cabinet, and husband of the Princess Royal. The prize was too great. "Men must work, and women must weep." The poor girl had to go overboard. Gad, how bitter she is now ! She was always sharp ; sharp enough to be caught by sharpness. That's the trouble with the Princess. She is so innocent she spoils the best intrigue. But I shall manage it. Hm ! there's some one coming.

[*Retires.*

Enter KNAVE OF HEARTS.

K. of H. This must be the place, — an unfrequented room in the palace. It's a good joke my being a conspirator. I shouldn't be in it, if that girl the Ace of Diamonds hadn't refused me.

Re-enter DIAMONDS, with significant gestures as conspirator continued through the Act.

K. of D. What are trumps?

K. of H. Hearts.

K. of D. I pass.

K. of H. I make it spades.

K. of D. St ! some one comes.

[*They retire.*

Enter TEN. Re-enter KNAVES.

K. of D. What are trumps?

Ten. Hearts.

K. of D. I pass.

Ten. I make it spades.

K. of D. What news, my faithful Ten?

Ten. The Queen is to have a party.

K. of D. and H. Ha!!!

K. of H. Is it sure?

Ten. I heard it even now from her own royal lips.

K. of D. And does the King consent?

Ten. Unwillingly he does.

K. of D. 'Tis strange. What means this sudden determination?

K. of H. Doubtless it is to bring out the Ace.

K. of D. I fear there be more potent reasons. When comes it off?

Ten. On Thursday.

[*Sensation.*

K. of D. I feared it. 'Tis the time set for the plot.

K. of H. They must suspect.

Ten. Oh ! I am sure not.

K. of D. St ! some one comes.

[*KNAVES* *hide.* *TEN* *remains.*

Enter KING.

K. [*Aside.*] If I could find Diamonds, I would instruct him about the examination. [*To TEN.*] Have you seen the Knave of Diamonds ?

Ten. Not since yesterday, your majesty.

K. I would fain speak to him of the conspiracy. I will seek him further. [*Exit KING.*]

KNAVES *come out.*

K. of D. What said the King ?

Ten. He but remarked upon the coolness of the weather as he passed.

K. of H. 'Tis well. I feared it had been more serious. But had you any further news ?

Ten. A new aspirant for the hand of the Princess.

K. of H. Impossible !

K. of D. Can it be so ? Who ?

Ten. The White Knight.

K. of D. [*Aside.*] The conspiracy must go on. [*Aloud.*] Ten, have the guards been tampered with ?

Ten. Copies of Schenck on Poker have been distributed freely among them, and Spades —

K. of D. Take care ! the Queen.

[*KNAVES* *hide.*

Enter QUEEN.

Q. [*Aside.*] Where is Hearts ? I must see him. [*Sees TEN, who is practising minuet steps awkwardly.*] My faithful Ten, have you seen his majesty ?

Ten. I left him just now in his apartment.

Q. I'll seek him there.

[*Exit Queen.*]

Enter KNAVES.

K. of D. Thursday, at midnight, is the hour. Ten, guard every approach to the palace. Hearts, you will take command of —

Ten. St ! the Ace.

[*KNAVES retire.*]

Enter ACE OF HEARTS.

A. of H. [*Aside.*] I must find the Joker to give him this book of conundrums. What ! the Ten here ! [*To Ten.*] Ten, have you seen the Queen ?

Ten. No, your royal highness, she has not passed this way. I have just come in to find the King. [*Exit Ace of Hearts.*]

Enter KNAVES.

K. of D. As I said just now, Hearts will direct —

Ten. St ! some one comes.

[*KNAVES retire.*]

Enter stealthily three ACES.

A. of C. We were seeking some unfrequented part of the palace to practise the minuet.

Ten. You will find the next apartment quiet. This one seems liable to intrusion. [*Exeunt ACES.*]

Enter KNAVES.

K. of D. Secure the persons of the Royal Family. Then proclaim Spades trumps. The King of Spades will at once —

Enter HERALD. — False start.

Herald. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye ! His majesty the King has ordered all the suitors for the hand of her Royal Highness to appear at the Queen's German, and pass a com-

petitive examination for the place of Royal Consort. Long live his majesty, King of Hearts !

[*Cornet. Sensation. Exit HERALD.*

K. of D. [Aside, on one side of the stage where he retires formally to soliloquize.] A new complication. The plot must be postponed. We'll all go in for the examination first.

K. of H. [On other side, in same manner.] Gad, here's a new trouble. Just when a fellow wants to enjoy himself he must get up this confounded examination. And we must go in. It won't do to depend entirely on the conspiracy. It's bad enough to have to plot, but this is worse still. What a pity the Ace of Diamonds refused me ! She's such a stunner ! She doesn't trouble you with conundrums and competitions. She likes to be merry. And what a bore it will be too, if I win, to be the husband of the Princess. But there's fun in it, too. Royal consorts are not so badly off, after all. I'll go in — and win ? Yes, and win.

[*KNAVES retire.*

Enter KING.

K. I cannot find Diamonds.

Ten. He must be in the garden of the palace, your majesty.

K. Come, I will confer with you upon this matter.

[*Exit with TEN, who makes signs behind the KING's back to the KNAVES.*

Re-enter KNAVES.

K. of H. Jove ! isn't it queer ? Such a joke ! A new suitor for the Princess, and a competitive examination between us all, — Music, Dancing, and Conundrums.

K. of D. [Aside.] This looks dangerous.

K. of H. You and I are about even, old boy, on those things.

K. of D. The new rival is very fascinating, they say.

K. of H. Yes, the White Knight sweeps the board ; but the King and Queen don't favor him. He has no chance. We can beat him two to one.

K. of D. Hm ! Hearts, I have an idea. Suppose we join to euchre the stranger, and then play it out between ourselves. It's a three-handed game now.

K. of H. Agreed ! fair play between us, though.

K. of D. Oh, of course, of course ! St ! there comes the Queen.

[*They retire.*]

Enter QUEEN with Tarts.

Q. There ! How pleased the King will be ! And Hearts is fond of them, too. The best I ever made. I hope they are better than the Queen of Diamonds' saw-dust pound-cake with plaster frosting. I'll set them here to cool. Nobody will dare to touch them. It's high treason, at the least. They are all marked with the crown. Now about the music.

[*Exit QUEEN.*]

Enter KNAVES.

K. of D. [Aside.] Good ! A glorious plan ! It will ruin them both, and then I shall have a *lone hand*. [Aloud.] Hearts, let's make the White Knight eat the tarts.

K. of H. Gad ! a capital joke. We'll do it.

K. of D. Put on an apron, and take them to him as a present from the Ace.

K. of H. What a head you have ! But let us take a few ourselves.

K. of D. Thank you. I never eat between meals. I am afraid they'd disagree with [Aside.] my plans.

K. of H. Here goes then.

[*Eats with signs of approbation. Puts on a handkerchief as an apron and carries them away.*]

K. of D. Here's another *double* and the *rub* without the Princess. The game is sure. [Retires.]

Enter ACE OF HEARTS.

A. of H. He must win. He sings like an angel. And such dancing! But the conundrums! I'm afraid he isn't up to them. But then he's *so* clever. He beat in all the games last summer. And he is *so* handsome. I have sent him a splendid book of conundrums. If he cares for me, he'll get it up. He can't fail.

Enter WHITE KNIGHT.

W. K. Charming Princess.

[*ACE screams.*]

A. of H. What! you here! How dared you?

W. K. Am I too bold?

A. of H. [*With effusion.*] Oh, no! [*Confused.*] That is—yes—of course—here in the palace. [*Alarmed.*] If you were discovered!

W. K. Oh! never fear. The game is worth the candle. And then I have secured the Queen.

A. of H. You were the minstrel, then?

W. K. By that disguise I gained admission to the palace.

A. of H. What reckless daring!

W. K. 'Twas little risk. Love wears its own sure panoply, and I would have rushed to you, though you were the Iron Maiden of Nuremberg. Oh, sublimate of princely womanhood! Can you have forgotten the supreme bliss of last summer? That memory dwells ever in my heart, like some lone hermit in his cell. I saw you gathering lilies, and they seemed to spring themselves to meet the fairest of their

kind. My senses failed for very happiness. I seemed to sit upon a lotus and be borne adown the Ganges.

A. of H. [Aside.] Oh, do hear him talk ! He's just heavenly. 'Twas exactly so last summer.

W. K. And then you spoke the simple words, "Why, there's a fisherman." I woke, and every fibre of my being thrilled in harmony, as when the viol sings its strain under the master's hand. I seized some slight pretence of broken tackle, or untimely floods, and dwelt near by. We met. I gazed into your eyes,—not eyes, but heavenly loop-holes, through whose shining blue I peeped into the bliss of Paradise. We danced, and as we turned we left the earth and swam through endless space into eternity. Ah, the envious elder maids looked grave, and whispered, but we heeded not. True love needs no duenna. Do you remember?

A. of H. Yes, I remember. How could I forget ? It was the first — But —

W. K. I could not doubt it. And now I fear nothing, but the sweet token of your affection. From your own hands —

A. of H. [Aside.] Oh, he has received the conundrums ! He'll win now surely.

W. K. The gift *was* yours then, pearl of maidens ?

A. of H. [Hesitatingly.] Yes, I did send it ; but I — I only thought —

W. K. [Interrupting.] Oh, don't explain ! *[Aside.]* Ecstatic thought ! The tarts *were* hers. So young, and a pattern of housewifery ! *[Aloud.]* They were superb. I devoured them,—*crammed* them instantly. They are absorbed into my being.

A. of H. [Aside.] Oh, what a dear, enthusiastic creature ! I was sure he would take them in. He's certain, certain to win now. *[Aloud.]* But you know —

W. K. [Interrupting.] Oh, yes ! I heard the proclama-

tion of the Herald. And did you consent to the competition?

A. of H. [Simply.] I knew you'd win, of course.

W. K. Thanks, adorable Princess, for your confidence. I am ready for the contest. We cannot fail. Your gift has given me new power, and now your assurance is a sure presage of success. Have I your permission then to try?

A. of H. [Sinking her head on his shoulder, almost inaudibly.] Yes!

W. K. Oh, I could hear that sound, though 'twere less audible than silence itself!

A. of H. You are — that is, you have — *carte blanche*.

A. of H. Oh, I hear some one coming.

[They run off different ways, turning several times and throwing kisses.

Re-enter KNAVE OF DIAMONDS in a rage.

K. of D. Perdition swallow him ! He has secured the Princess. That point is gone. But the game's not lost. There's the *competition*. If he wins that too, I'll spring the tarts upon him and blow up Hearts too. . . . And, should that fail, I have still the plot. I'll upset the state, and climb upon the ruins. . . . But the competition — [Sings a scale.] The music's safe, at least. Then the conundrums ! . . . Bah ! I've wit enough to beat innocent Hearts and spooney Joker. But the dancing. . . . Hm. . . . 'Tis not so sure. . . . [Thinks.] Good ! I have a chance. [Calls.] Ho ! Page. [Enter PAGE.] Go call the Herald. [Exit PAGE.] The Herald is a dancing-master in disguise, — a spy of the King of Spades. He'll teach me privately. An' my good legs fail me not, I'll pirouette it with the best of them. [Enter HERALD.] Good morning to your nimbleness.

Herald. Good morning to your excellency.

K. of D. Thou art a dancer, I believe.

Her. I do skip a little, please your excellency.

K. of D. Canst thou teach thy art?

Her. Ay, I could teach it even to the Cardiff Giant, or the mummies in the Museum.

K. of D. Good ! I would learn it. But st ! some one comes. Bah ! the palace swarms like an ant-hill. [Retires.

Enter KNAVE OF HEARTS.

Her. [Without knowing that K. of D. is gone.] Your excellency must first —

K. of H. Good morning, Herald. Well met, well met ! [Mysteriously.] I have need of thy skill. I would get up a dance,—some master-stroke, a Terpsichorean avalanche, something to make the women sigh and languish, and all mankind grow green with jealousy.

Her. I have that power. [Looking round.] But just now I had another pupil.

K. of H. Ha !! a spy. [Retires.

Her. [Turns back.] And now they both are gone.

[The two KNAVES peep in at sides and see each other.

K. of H. Oh ! it's Diamonds.

K. of D. Oh ! it's Hearts. [They come out laughing.

K. of H. Let's learn together.

Her. Yes, 'twill be a conservatory.

K. of D. Oh ! a college.

K. of H. Or, better yet, a university.

Her. Now, your excellencies, take your places. I will lay aside this book.

Both Knaves. A book ? What is it ?

Her. A book of conundrums I was to give the White Knight from the Princess. [Sensation.] I have not yet had time.

K. of H. We will take it to him. [Signs to *K. of D.* *Her.* Good ! [Gives book to *K. of H.* The KNAVES look at the book, and put it away with significant gestures.] Now, gentlemen, take your positions.

[Grotesque lesson in dancing, according to the skill of the performers. *Cornet* heard outside.

K. of D. Ha ! The court is assembling. We must prepare for the examination. [Start to go out. *Curtain* falls.

ACT III.

Hall of the Palace. A pillar on each side large enough to conceal one of the KNAVES. Dais, throne, etc. Enter in procession, with music, the KING, QUEEN, ACE, LADIES, TEN, HERALD, and other cards at pleasure. They take their places.

K. Now, my dear, you have your party. What do you want to do ?

Q. Let's have the business first,—say the competitive examination. Where's the Fairy ?

K. Oh ! she can't be far off.

Enter FAIRY.

K. Are you ready for the examination to proceed ?

Fairy. The candidates will be here presently. I have prepared the papers — [Cornet heard.] There they are now.

Enter KNAVE OF HEARTS with PAGE. Salutes the FAIRY and the royal party, and takes his place. Another *Cornet*. *Enter KNAVE OF DIAMONDS* in same manner. Another. *Enter WHITE KNIGHT.*

Fairy. Let the Herald announce the contest.

Her. Oyez, oyez, oyez ! The great competition for the hand of the incomparable princess, Ace of Hearts, under the rules of chivalry, will now begin. The trial will be in music, dancing, and conundrums. The fairy Heartsease, Grand Protectress of the Kingdom of Hearts, will preside and be umpire. Long live his majesty, King of Hearts ! [*Calls.*] The Knave of Diamond, Left Bower to his majesty ! [*K. of D. comes forward, bows, and takes his place. Applause.*] The Knave of Hearts, Right Bower to the Queen ! [*K. of H. comes forward in same manner.*] The White Knight, called the Joker, otherwise the Best Bower, the Hero of the West, and Crown Prince of Euchre ! [*JOKER same.*]

Her. [*To them.*] Most noble gentlemen, you pledge your honor that you have not seen the papers ; that you have no jokers, ponies, cribs, or other illegal assistance about you ; that you have not unduly crammed for this examination ; and that you have no bets pending on the result.

All. We do.

K. of H. [*To K. of D.*] Say, Diamonds, will you bet ?

K. of D. I never do.

K. of H. The more fool you.

Fairy. [*To KING, QUEEN, and ACE.*] Now, you all promise to be satisfied with the event, and accept the successful man ?

K. [*With some confusion.*] Yes.

Q. [*With regret.*] Yes.

Ace. [*Timidly, yet with confidence.*] Oh, yes !

Fairy. Then forward to the fray, and may the best man win. Herald, bid the trumpet sound, and order the contestants to proceed.

[*Gives papers to the HERALD. Trumpet sounds.*]

Her. [*Reads.*] Sing an air from some Italian opera.

[*K. of D. sings.*]

A. of S. [*Aside to girls.*] He must win. They can't do better than that.

A. of C. Perhaps you wish he wouldn't win.

A. of S. [Confused.] Oh ! I don't care.

K. Bravo, Diamonds ! Magnificent ! Grand ! Such intelligence ! The perfection of Art !

Q. Pshaw ! but there's no soul in it. His delivery was wretched, and his *F* was flat.

K. There ! I knew you'd be trying to influence the umpire. Call the Queen to order.

Fairy. Your majesties should both be quiet.

K. But she's trying to prejudice —

Q. But you began it.

K. I didn't say a word.

Q. Oh, you did !

Fairy. There, there, my dears, let them go on.

Her. Silence in the lists ! [K. of H. sings. *Applause.*]

K. [To Queen.] Oh, such execrable singing !

Q. 'Twas exquisite,—so tender and sweet ! You have no taste in music ; and then you're so prejudiced.

K. How absurd !

A. of C. [To A. of D.] Now it's your turn to despair.

A. of D. Oh ! he'll never win any prize. He's too gay and good-natured. But he sings well enough, for a man. I shouldn't like to have him sing too well.

A. of C. I suppose not. He might win if he did.

A. of D. You mean thing !

[WHITE KNIGHT sings. *All silent for a few seconds ; then a concerted, long-drawn sigh.*]

K. [Recovering.] Did you ever hear such a ridiculous performance ?

Q. Oh ! 'twas hideous.

A. of D. [Aside to ladies.] Divine, enchanting, rapturous ! Such delicacy, such power, such expression ! He sings *pianissimo* as daintily as the Apollo Club, and his *forte* is like Thomas' brass in Tannhäuser. I hope he'll win.

A. of C. Yes; for then Hearts will lose. And there may be a sequel to Rejected Addresses.

A. of S. If it had been your case, there never would have been any rejected addresses at all.

A. of C. Bah! I never heard of any in your case.

Her. The contestants will each dance a *pas seul*.

K. of D. I am a little lame this evening, and my physician prohibits dancing.

K. Stuff! nonsense! Go in, Diamonds, and crush them with something immense.

K. of D. [Aside.] I really don't know how, your majesty.

[*K. of D. dances poorly, or may decline.*]

K. [With suppressed rage, aside.] I discard you. Such a *fiasco*!

A. of C. [To A. of S.] There, your stock is looking up now.

Q. [To KING.] Oh, yours is a nice man, isn't he?

K. Dancing is absurd for a man,—low, out of fashion. It don't count.

Q. Low, indeed! They say Bismarck danced at a festival lately with all the girls on his estate. Wait till Hearts dances. [HEARTS dances. Applause.]

Q. There! What did I tell you! Oh, such grace! such agility!

K. [Vexed.] Bah!

A. of C. [To A. of D.] Aren't you a little afraid he'll win?

A. of D. Pooh! I should like to see him!

[WHITE KNIGHT dances. Applause.]

A. of H. [Aside.] I knew he would. He danced so last summer. 'Twas heavenly.

Her. The Fairy Heartsease herself will now propound the conundrums.

Fairy. How many men did the King of France have after

he marched up the hill with twenty thousand men, and then marched down again?

K. of D. Twenty thousand. It's only a catch.

K. Shrewd fellow, that Diamonds.

Q. But that's not the answer.

K. That's just it, there isn't any.

Fairy. Silence!

K. of H. Twenty thousand and two. He made *high* and then *low*, — that counts him two.

Q. There! there's some ingenuity in that!

Fairy. [To W. K.] What do you say?

W. K. Twenty-two thousand, of course. A march adds two to the score.

[*Applause.* KING and QUEEN look blank.]

A. of H. How did he know that? It wasn't in the book I sent him.

Fairy. Why is a London hansom cab like a Shanghai rooster?

K. of D. Hm! Because it is higher behind than it is before.

K. of H. I'll give it up. No! because it is big enough for two, but isn't big enough for four.

W. K. No, because it is not a coach-in-China.

A. of D. Oh, how clever!

Q. Isn't he bright? but then he can't dance. Hearts beats him in that.

Fairy. How does a wild goose find his course in his migrations?

K. Oh, that isn't fair! That's Natural History.

Q. Oh, they ought to know it. Hearts will, I am sure.

K. of D. He don't. He never loses it.

K. of H. Oh, pshaw! That isn't it. It's because he always has a beak-on to guide him.

W. K. Exactly ; and he always keeps it on a head.

[*Applause. By-play of ACE throughout, apparently modest and timid, but intensely interested, and changing constantly. Confident, however, all the time.* HERALD hands papers to FAIRY.]

Her. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye ! The decision is about to be given. Long live his majesty, King of Hearts !

Fairy. The White Knight has scored 981 to Diamonds 673, and Hearts 755, and wins. Your majesties, I present you your future son-in-law.

K. [*Aside.*] Deuce take the fellow ! And that beggarly Diamonds ! why didn't he exert himself ? [KING comes forward and congratulates him, shaking hands. The others go sulkily, DIAMONDS to right of performers, HEARTS to left, JOKER in middle front.] I am pleased to add to my family a young man of so spotless a character. [*Aside.*] He's not so bad after all, though I had set my heart on Diamonds. I am glad it wasn't Hearts.

[KING goes over to DIAMONDS and converses, comforting him. QUEEN comes forward, and offers JOKER her hand, which he kisses.]

Q. Peerless young man ! I congratulate you. [Beckons to ACE, who comes forward.] My daughter, receive your betrothed. [*Aside.*] Poor Hearts ! I am so disappointed in him ! But he is so unlucky ! I am glad, any way, it isn't Diamonds. [ACE and W. K. embrace.]

A. of H. [*Aside to W. K.*] I knew you'd win. You're so clever.

W. K. [*Aside.*] It was your gift and love inspired me. Those tarts — [QUEEN goes to talk to HEARTS.]

A. of H. [Surprised, aside.] But I didn't —

Q. [Interrupting.] Now let's have the dance.

[They take places. Dance a minuet. By-play between KNAVE OF HEARTS and ACE OF DIAMONDS.]

Q. [After the dance.] I am so hungry. Ten, bring in the refreshment.

A. of H. Oh, no, mamma ! let's dance again. I am not hungry at all. [To JOKER.] Are you ?

W. K. [With an effort.] No, of course not.

Q. You silly grasshoppers, you may feed on dew. I can't.

Enter TEN in a fright.

Ten. May it please your majesty, the tarts are gone.

All. [Shriek.] Gone !

K. [In a passion.] What ho ! the headsman ! It's damnable treason. They were made by our own consort's royal hand. It's heresy, sacrilege, sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion.

W. K. [Agitated, to A. of H.] What ! were those the royal tarts ?

A. of H. [Convulsed.] And you ate them ! Oh, horror ! We are lost !

W. K. Say not a word. I'll shield you.

A. of H. [Cries out.] It was not he. It was all a mistake.

[Faints in his arms, and is removed by two PAGES.]

K. of H. [To QUEEN.] Certainly it was the Joker.

Q. It must be he.

K. of D. [To KING.] It was the Joker. We saw him in the apartment.

K. It can only be he. And our intended son-in-law ! 'Fore George ! 'tis parricide ! Guards, to the block with him !

K. of H. I say, Diamonds, this is too rough. Let's get him off.

K. of D. [Aside.] Hold your tongue, or I'll expose you.

W. K. I refuse not the axe ; but the law requires a trial.

K. Zounds ! he's right ! he's right ! That trifle of detail had escaped me. But it's sound law, eh, Diamonds ?

K. of D. True, true, your majesty, he has that right, but it amounts to nothing. We'll convict him easily. The proof is damning.

K. Good ! Bring me my robe and wig. I'll sit as judge and try him on the spot.

Q. I thank your majesty. My honor will be avenged. [Aside.] I wish the youth had been less comely. 'Twere a pity, too, to sever so melodious a windpipe.

[KING puts on his robe and wig.]

K. Herald, open the court.

Her. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye ! This supreme court of the Kingdom of Hearts is now open for business. The White Knight, called Joker, come into court.

W. K. Here.

Her. [Reads.] You are charged with having surreptitiously, wickedly, and with malice aforethought, stolen, taken, and carried away the sacred tarts, made by the anointed hands of her royal majesty ; against the laws of Hoyle in such cases made and provided ; and contrary to the tenor of the nursery rhyme handed down from time immemorial. Long live his majesty, King of Hearts !

W. K. May it please your majesty, I call for a bill of particulars.

K. Say, Diamonds, is it regular ?

K. of D. Your majesty must not allow it.

K. The demand is refused.

W. K. I appeal.

K. Of course he can appeal, Diamonds ?

K. of D. No, he can't, your majesty.

K. Gad ! how troublesome this law is ! I revoke the order then.

All. But you can't revoke. It's against the rules.

K. Confound the wretched law ! Fairy, what shall I do ?

Fairy. What a fool you are to attempt this human way of

trying cases ! It never succeeds. The guilty ones always get off, and the innocent ones are convicted. Try the case as becomes the King of Hearts. Let the prisoner turn a card. If he turn a red one, he is innocent. If he turn a black one, he is guilty. That's much more likely to be right.

K. Just the thing ! We'll do it. Bring the cards.

[W. K. turns a card and holds it up.]

All. Red ! He's innocent.

K. Charming ! How simple ! Now it is all right. Go on with the dancing.

Q. But somebody must have stolen the tarts.

K. Oh, bother ! there's a new trouble. Of course, somebody must. Try the cards again. We'll all cut, and the lowest is guilty.

[They all cut, and give the names of their cards.]

Nobody has lower than three. Two KNAVES come last, and cut deuces.

K. It's between the two rivals. Try again.

[They cut deuces again. They cut again, and cut deuces a third time.]

K. Faith, they're both guilty.

W. K. May it please your majesty —

[As soon as he begins to speak, the KNAVES slink behind the two pillars and change their costume.]

W. K. I received the tarts by a messenger, pretending to come from the Princess. I thought she must have sent them.

A. of H. *[Coming to.]* I never sent them. I thought you took them.

W. K. And now I think of it, 'twas yonder Knave of Hearts that brought them in disguise.

K. It is a conspiracy of these varlets. Where are they ? We'll have their heads off instead. Ho ! guards, pursue them.

Fairy. Stop ! never mind your clumsy executioners. I'll do it for you much better than that. [Waves wand an instant. Pillars vanish, and the Knaves are seen turned into candelabra, holding lights.] There ! they will show the way now, if they never took it themselves.

A. of S. and A. of D. [To FAIRY.] Now, dear Fairy, don't be too hard upon them. It's a pity to waste young men in this way, when there are so few. Please pardon them.

Q. Oh, yes ! we can't go on with the party without them.

A. of H. Yes, do ! Our play will be a tragedy if it doesn't come out well ; and I never could like tragedy.

A. of S. and A. of D. We'll vouch for them.

Fairy. Well, go and swear them to good behavior.

A. of S. and A. of D. [Go towards the candelabra.] Hold up your right hands.

A. of D. Oh ! you have got them up already.

A. of S. You solemnly swear to be excellent young men, to be very kind and attentive, and never plot any more, nor steal any more, nor smoke, nor do anything that isn't nice, as long as you live. [They nod as statues. To FAIRY.] There, they promise, you see.

Fairy. [Waves her wand.] Now go and take them.

[They go and put their hands on their arms. The candelabra wake up with a start, and make love to the ACES.

K. of H. [To A. of D.] But I didn't know you cared for me. You told me once you didn't.

A. of D. Yes, but then — well — perhaps — I think I must have been mistaken.

K. of D. [To A. of S.] By Jove ! Spades, how handsome you are ! You're a thousand times better than the Princess.

A. of S. And will you promise never to look at her any more ?

K. of D. Never ! And do you care for me ?

A. of S. I suppose I ought not to ; but I can't always do what I ought ; can you ?

K. of D. I'll try hereafter, any way, if you will care for me still. [Demonstration of affection.]

Ten. [To *A. of C.*] My dear Clubs, we must each take the *odd card*, you see.

A. of C. I don't see why I should refuse you. The Ten is as good as the court cards in cribbage, and we may count it so, even if we are beyond the crib-age.

[*TEN takes her hand.*]

Fairy. There! your majesty. It has all come right at last, and they are well paired. So you must pardon the bad ones and bless them all, and then we can go on with the dancing. [They take their places.]

K. So I do, I am sure. And it's not a bad lot after all. Let's see, fifteen two, fifteen four, three common pairs six, and one pair royal,—sixteen,—and two for that knave's heels eighteen. That's my hand. Now [*to audience*] show yours.

Music. Curtain.



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